

JANAPADA

Territory and Its Importance in Ancient Indian Warfare and Now



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The Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi, is an independent think-tank dealing with national security and conceptual aspects of land warfare, including conventional and sub-conventional conflicts and terrorism. CLAWS conducts research that is futuristic in outlook and policy-oriented in approach.

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JANAPADA

Territory and Its Importance in Ancient Indian Warfare and Now

Janapada = jana (people) + pada (where they put their feet). In simple terms, territory or land.

Territory is integral to nationalist discourse for its symbolic role in building national identity. It is a multidimensional concept which can be studied from a range of perspectives. In addition to having economic value it has social, geopolitical, institutional and sentimental value. These values attached to territory make it an important projection of state. Both in the past and at present, this has made territory the prime reason for war and chief component of warfare strategy. It also promotes peace, by defining borders, fixing identity and delineating sovereignty.

Territory divides. Us from them. And it unites. By forging bonds of oneness.

Introduction

“Janapada” or territory is a multidimensional concept. Origin of the word territory can be traced to the Latin word “*territorium*” meaning agricultural and grazing land. This reflects an economic construct of the word. Territory is also deeply embedded in social relations and practices. It revolves around societal questions of power, ideology, and authority. This provides a social connotation to territory. A politico-institutional understanding of territory can be developed by looking at its close relation to the notion of state and sovereignty. This adds another dimension to the concept.

In the context of India, we see a gradual evolution of territory from a socio-economic entity to a political symbol of state. It evolved from jana (group of people) to janapadas (people in a defined territory) to mahajanapadas (empire/state system) to the modern Indian state. These economic-socio-political values attached to territory made it the prime reason for war and the chief component of state warfare strategy.

Although significant research has been done on the doctrine and methodology of modern Indian warfare, one aspect has not been satisfactorily

addressed. This gap is the temporal understanding of evolution of India's warfare strategies. Study of the past can help us view the present and build the future on firm footing. This paper attempts to undertake a comparative analysis between the Ancient Indian Warfare Strategy and the Modern Indian Warfare Strategy. Kautilya's Arthashastra constitute the basic source material for ancient India, supplemented by other texts such as Mahabharata, Ramayana and Dharmashastra to provide a holistic picture.

The paper has been divided into the following four parts:

- Evolution of the Concept of Territory in India; from Ancient Times to Present
- Dynamic Way of Looking at Territory
- Importance of Janapada (Territory) in Warfare
- Importance of Foot Soldiers

While looking at these four dimensions an attempt has been made to contextualise different facets of warfare and understand their interrelationships. In particular, case study of the ancient Indian janapada of Magadh (part of present Eastern India) has been undertaken to provide a spatial context. Specific attention has been paid to locate the extent and form in which "janapada" and foot soldiers were and continue to be essential to Indian warfare.

Evolution of the Concept of Territory in India; from Ancient Times to Present

The evolution of the concept of territory in India, from an economic entity to one with politico-institutional and sentimental value, was a gradual one as summarised below.

The Economy of War; from Cattle to Land

Approximately 3,500 years ago during the Early Vedic age (1500 BCE-1200 BCE) the main source of wealth was cattle as it was a mobile pastoral community. There was no concept of land territory as there was no defined state territory or centralised political control. War was fought for control of cattle wealth and not possession of territory. This is the reason for the fact that while the term Jana or people appears many times in Rig Veda, Janapada does not appear even once. Absence of the concept of territory meant that there was no regular standing army for its defence, the military functions being invested in the Vedic assemblies.

By the Later Vedic period (1100 BCE-500 BCE), land became an important source of wealth due to establishment of settled agricultural communities. It also became an important source of state revenue (*bali, bhaga, shulka* and

kara). Ancient Indian texts (Arthashastra, Dharmasutra) mention territory of the state as the wealth of the nation (*kosh*). Kautilya's "Saptang Theory of State" mentions *kosh* as one of the seven vital elements of state, others being *Swami* (ruler), *Amatya* (minister), *Danda* (army), etc. Thus territory becomes an important limb of the state.

Even today land is an important source of revenue in terms of land tax, agriculture and forest produce, etc. It is a source of wealth and development for the country and an important basis for sustaining war efforts. The slogan "Jai Jawan Jai kisan" displays the importance given to farmers, land and soldiers in the Indian political discourse. Thus land continues to be an important aspect of the economy of war.

Territorial Aspect of the State

The territorial aspect of the state appeared by the Later Vedic period. By 500 BCE there was rise of large tracts of consolidated territory, janapadas, under the rule of a monarch or *ganasanghas* (clans). These janapadas combined to form mahajanapadas. With the evolution of the state with defined set of borders, the need for a standing army to defend the territory arose. A well-defined institution emerged led by *Senapati* with specialised officials for different divisions—*Padadhyaksha* (infantry), *Asvadhyaksha* (cavalry), *Navadhyaksha* (navy), *Ayudhagaradhyaksha* (armoury). The division of the armed forces for the purpose of efficiency and specialisation exists even today.

This was the beginning of the state system as we know today. It was characterised by a defined set of boundary, citizens that paid taxes and were governed by the law of the land, a political class for governance and a military for its defence.

This continued emphasis on territorial borders can be seen reflected in the seventeenth century Westphalian model of nation state. It considered territory, in addition to its people, as an essential defining feature of the modern state. The nineteenth century era of globalisation introduced certain changes in this understanding. Globalisation diluted the "territorial aspect of state" by making borders fluid. According to Sasmita Mohanty, it pushed the world towards a borderless and de-territorialised world. A significant step in this direction was made by the European states that constituted the European Union with flexible border regulations.

However, it would be wrong to assume that the concept of a 'well defined and demarcated territorial space' has become irrelevant in the era of Globalisation. Borders need to be conceptualised as transformative processes. Those that were once perceived as fixed physical lines that divided geographical spaces have evolved (Diener and Hagen, 2009). Borders have

become workable.

For example, the 2016 surgical strike conducted by the Indian Army raised several questions. Did India violate Pakistan's sovereignty by crossing the border? Are borders sacrosanct? During the operation the Indian Army crossed the Line of Control (LoC). It was not the International Border which is sanctioned by UN conventions. India defended its decision by calling it a limited strike against terrorist outfits that threatened India's national sovereignty. Internationally it was projected as a response to the attack on India's territorial integrity—the Uri attack.

Thus borders are not unalterable. They can be worked, fashioned, or manipulated to serve national interest.

Territory in the Psychological Domain

While the territorial borders and an organised army provide a physical form to the state, the psychological form is provided by the emotional connect of the people with their land.

This psychological connect is perfectly captured in the word “*chetana*” or *shared consciousness*. It is a common thread of sentimental values attached to one's “motherland” that binds the people together. In ancient India such sentimental connections existed with one's village at the micro level and with one's empire at the macro level. In modern times it is reflected in the notion of nationalism, a sense of affinity with fellow citizens and pride in symbols of one's nation. It is a positive reinforcement that is built over time. The evolution of Modern Indian nation as a unified whole was the result of a long-drawn process of assimilation, consolidation and integration spread over centuries. Some of these nation building processes included political integration under the rule of Mauryas, Guptas, Mughals and the colonial rule of the British. This provided territorial and political cohesion. Cultural cohesion was provided by Sufi and Bhakti movements, the socio-religious reform movements and the Indian national movement. The resultant model of nation state with its ‘unity in diversity’ was different from the imposed linear unity of the Westphalian model of nation state.

The idea of a ‘nation’ in the psychological domain is fluid. In ancient India there were areas within the state that were outside the control of the king. There is mention of unsubdued jungle tribes (mlechchhas) living within the state borders but were outside central control. Today as well there are pockets of territory where the reach of Indian state is not absolute—tribes in Andaman and Nicobar islands, insurgency affected regions of North-Eastern India and the red corridor. Thus, essence of territory goes beyond the physical or geographical domain to the psychological domain. ***Having influence is more important than mere vertical and horizontal***

possession of territory.

Sometimes a small piece of land can help a nation expand its sphere of influence. For example, Andaman and Nicobar islands cover a small area of 8,249 square km (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*) but have huge security connotations. They can help India shape the Indian Ocean Region dynamics in terms of surveillance, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), maritime safety and security, open channels of communication, sustainable resource extraction, etc. From the defence perspective, the naval and air bases on these islands can help in fulfilment of India's regional aspirations and provide strategic depth to counter increasing Chinese presence.

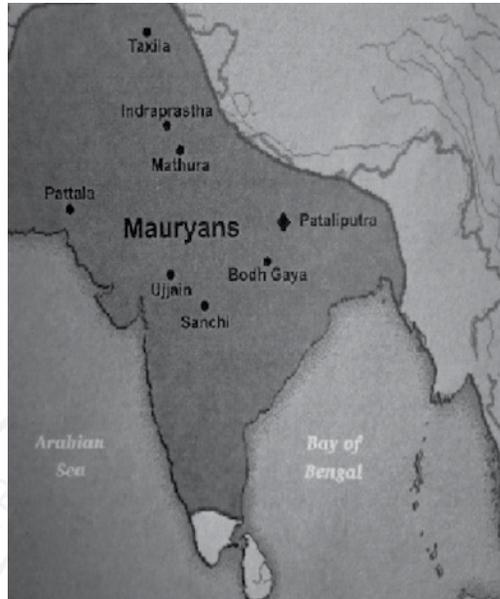
Case Study of Magadha: Understanding the Evolution of the Concept of Territory

This section seeks to trace the significance of Magadha region from ancient to present times. This can help provide a spatial context to the evolution of territorial state systems in Eastern India.

Magadha was an ancient Indian kingdom, a Mahajanapada, located on the Indo-Gangetic plains in eastern India. Its core area spread over what is today the modern state of Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

The following maps (figures 1 and 2) show the rise and territorial expansion of the Magadha state. It evolved from a provincial kingdom to an empire. Territory became an important limb of the state. Its expansion through war and conquest became essential for the state's survival.

Figure 1. Magadha Kingdom Fifth Century BCE

Figure 2. Magadha Empire 250 BCE

The strategic significance of this region continued in modern times. It was an important seat of power during the British rule with Calcutta as a provincial capital and an important trading centre. It became a cradle for nationalism during India's struggle for freedom. It became militarily significant during the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971, resulting in independence of Bangladesh.

Today eastern India continues to remain important because of its connectivity with Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh and with East Asia through Bay of Bengal. It has provided opportunity for defence cooperation and confidence building through military diplomacy. Combined exercise such as exercise Sampriti (Bangladesh), Exercise Maitree (Thailand) and cooperation through regional forums like BIMSTEC are some examples. It has also been a source of several maritime disputes especially between India and Bangladesh. In 2014 the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) ruled in favour of Bangladesh, awarding it a major area of disputed territory in the Bay of Bengal. It resulted in expansion of Bangladesh's territorial sea and exclusive economic zone.

Dynamic Way of Looking at Territory

Today it is possible for a state to target areas across the border without crossing it. This may be done by usage of drones or surface-to-air (SAM) missiles. An Electro-Magnetic Pulse (EMP) weapon can be used to disable enemy aircraft's avionics or jam its GPS.

Do these acts violate a nation's sovereign territory?

Today a nation's territory encompasses in addition to land frontiers, the frontiers of maritime and air space. If we look at territory in this dynamic way, violation of space is violation of a nation's territorial sovereignty.

Beyond the Land Frontier

Interpretation of janapada, or territory in ancient India, was primarily limited to land. This was because empires were largely land-based, with very few having riverine/sea borders. References to ships and trade by sea in texts, such as Aitreya Brahmana, show that some countries had a sea coast and invested state resources in defending their water frontier. This can be seen reflected in the Chola Empire which was an important naval power of its age. It employed state machinery to actively expand influence beyond the land boundary. An excellent example of this was the invasion and conquest of northern parts of Ceylon (modern-day Sri Lanka) by Raja Raja Chola I in 1017 CE.

Today we need a multidimensional approach of viewing territory. The word **territory invokes not only images of land border but extends to the realm of water, exclusive economic zone and air space.**

Melting polar ice of Arctic has made it more accessible to shipping and mineral industry. This has resulted in several competing territorial claims and strategic competition in the region. In future there is a possibility of these territorial claims extending even to the realm of outer space, which currently is a global common.

This dynamic way of looking at territory is especially important for India given the emerging threats from the water frontier. Indian Ocean Region has emerged as a theatre for strategic competition. India's coastal security strategy needs to focus on pushing the defensive perimeter further away from the coast into the seas. This can be done by creating national maritime domain awareness (NMDA) grid with sea-based sensors and land-based missiles. For situations of escalated confrontation an Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) strategy needs to be formulated. India's focus should be on development of area-denial weapons that operate on human command. Such systems can be based on a combination of either explosives, pre-targeted artillery shelling or smart guns with remote sensing equipment, having some level of Identification, friend or foe (IFF) capability.

However, **land remains central to the notion of territory.** A nation's air space or territorial waters is determined on the basis of its land border. National air space is the space above one's land; maritime territory is area beyond the mainland/coast.

Territorial Fixation

Threat of possible balkanisation has resulted in Territory minded approach in Indian national discourse. This can be attributed to a violent past (Partition, 1947) and internal threats posed by separatist forces. Focus on territorial integrity is essential for the nation's survival, especially in case of external military threats. However, one needs to avoid excessive territorial fixation. In military discourse the emphasis remains on 'not losing even an inch of territory.' A limited loss of territory is considered acceptable if it provides a greater strategic advantage somewhere else.

In the political realm there is a more practical and flexible approach with regard to territory. There have been instances where trading or returning territory helped further national interest. With Shimla Agreement 1972, India returned territory captured on the western front during the 1971 war as a goodwill gesture. Despite ongoing India-Pakistan border disputes, opening up of Kartarpur corridor provides hope for improved relations. **Land boundary agreement (LBA) between India and Bangladesh** resulted in exchange of enclaves. In the process India gave more territory than it received. The exchange was undertaken keeping in mind some pragmatic issues such as access to the enclaves, rights of the occupants, administrative convenience. It further helped to foster ties of friendship between the two countries. An overtly emotional way of looking at this deal as 'resulting in loss of territory' was avoided. The 'Jana-chetana' or shared consciousness of the masses was managed and directed. Popular perception was shaped to check hypernationalist tendencies.

Thus, territorial borders should be seen for their potential to constitute bridges and points of contact as much as they have traditionally constituted barriers to movement and communication (Newman, David).

Changing Attitudes; Solving Indo-China Border Dispute

Warriors in the past have traded land for personal benefits. Geopolitics is the art of giving and taking based on mutual interest. Janapada is an asset, and like any other asset should be traded if it provides political-economic-strategic mileage. To some we provide access (to territory) while to others we deny.

This flexible way of looking at territory may prove to be an essential step in solving India-China border dispute. We have to consider the possibility of a "land exchange" deal in the future to settle the dispute peacefully based on mutual benefit. Territory is just one limb of the state

and thus should not be the only criterion to measure patriotism or loyalty towards one's country.

China has put forward the idea of a land swap several times in the past. In the 1960s China proposed swapping of claims. It indicated possible acceptance of the McMahon Line in the east in exchange for India accepting China's claim on Aksai Chin. In the 1980s China demanded Indian concessions in the east, the Tawang tract, for favourable treatment elsewhere. However, India clearly rejected China's land swap proposal concerning Tawang region. India has adopted a firm stand stating that Tawang is an integral part of Arunachal Pradesh.

A land swap initiative cannot move forward without the mutual consent of both countries. India and China need to be willing to have an open discussion about each other's expectations and apprehensions. They may start by adopting this model to solve the border dispute in minor sectors or small stretches. Continued attempts at confidence building measures (CBMs) can also help in maintaining peace and stability along the line of actual control. Some such initiatives have taken the form of joint efforts at combating arms smuggling and disaster management. Border haats, on lines of Indo-Bangladesh haats, can be an effective mechanism for strengthening people-to-people contact. They can help make Indo-China border more open, connected and flexible. Border Defence Cooperation Agreement (BDCA), another CBM, is an example of sincere efforts by both sides to initiate dialogue. It is based on the principle of mutual and equal security. Under this agreement both sides agreed to exercise maximum self-restraint in case the two sides come to a face-to-face in disputed territory. However, BDCA is yet to provide promising results.

Another important prerequisite for Indo-China land swap agreement is forging Jana-chetana. People of both countries need to be willing to accept and actively support such initiative for settling borders. Jana and jana-chetana are intrinsically tied to janapada. Without their involvement, a land swap agreement or exchange of janapada would be ineffective.

Figure 3. A 4,000-km Line of Actual Control (LAC) marking the India-China border



There are around 20 places in the Western, Middle and Eastern sector where their claims overlap. Some of these areas are Trig Heights, Depsang bulge, Pangong Tso, Demchok, Chumur in eastern Ladakh, and Namka Chu, Sumdrong Chu, Yangste, Asaphilla, Long Ju, Dichu in Arunachal Pradesh, and Kaurik, Shipki La, Barahoti and Pulan Sunda in the central sector.

Disputed border continues to remain a core issue between the two countries. There have been several confrontations along the Indo-China border including skirmishes at Depsang (2013), Chumur (2014), Doklam (2017). Such disputes have time and again rendered relationship-building efforts ineffectual. Solving Indo-China border issue is an essential prerequisite for building a good relationship in the future.

Importance of Janapada (Territory) in Warfare

This section seeks to examine the relevance of territory in India's warfare. Territory constitutes an essential element of India's defence and offence strategy, both in the past and at present. Some aspects of application of territory to military operations have fundamentally remained the same. For example, considerations such as controlling the higher ground during war, ensuring uninterrupted supply chain, etc.

Looking at the other side of the coin, this paper acknowledges that warfare has changed over time. Factors other than territory have become

essential components of today's warfare. With changing domains of war, India needs a dynamic warfare strategy.

War as Fundamental Function of State

Arthashastra projects the State in ancient India as a living entity. It needed to grow by acquiring new territory. Religious sanctions and social conditioning required the King to fight not only in defence of the land but also for expanding frontiers. Rituals for conquest of new territory, such as *ashwamedha*¹ and *rajasuya*,² became important for proving imperial sovereignty.

As Kautilya opined in Arthashastra, "The prosperity of the state and its inhabitants cannot be maintained unless new territory is acquired by settlement of virgin lands, by alliance or by conquest." Conquest was an important method of acquisition of new territory. This made preparing for and waging war an integral part of the state activity.

Looking at present-day international scenario, territory continues to be the source of conflict and war. This is evident from China's efforts at extending its strategic periphery by building artificial islands. In fact China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) can be viewed as a key part of China's territorial empire building. The Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan is over land and its association with national consciousness. Russia's annexation of Crimea was not only because of economic significance of port of Sevastopol. It was also the psychological aspect of territorial expansion, i.e., building a Russian empire. International borders continue to be redrawn by force.

For the state to thrive, territorial expansion continues to be important. War, in all its forms and manifestations, continues to be the instrument for such expansion.

Territory was an integral aspect of the defence strategy as well. Kautilya talks about an ideal state that focused on the welfare of people—"Yogakshema." In this welfare state the ruler had threefold duty: "raksha" or protection of the state from external aggression, "palana" or maintenance of law and order within the state, and "yogakshema" or safeguarding the welfare of the people. For performance of all these functions territory was important.

Raksha of territory involved construction of defensive fortification such as water fortification (*audaka*), forest fortification (*vanadurga*), mountainous fortification (*parvata*). Specific attention was given to the strategic location of capital city, *sthaniya*. Patliputra, the capital of Magadha, was strategically located as it was the seat of state power. It was surrounded by hills on three sides and a river on the fourth, providing a natural line of defence. Its strategic location also provided it economic advantage as it was located on important

trade routes. Even today strategic location of the capital continues to remain important. In terms of connectivity and various forms of defence such as air defence systems, critical infrastructure protection unit, cybersecurity and so on. Waterway (moat) was used as a defence barrier in the past. Today Indira Gandhi Canal acts as a water boundary and a line of defence on Indo-Pakistan border.

Arthashastra mentions a code of ethics which was followed during and after the war. Conquest was not only of territory, the janapada, but also of its inhabitants, the jana. However, the occupied people were treated humanely. The troops went in as liberators and not conquerors. Dharmashastra warns that a country without people makes no sense as there can be no Kingdom without people. A “no scorched Earth policy” was followed. The civilian population of both countries at war was left free to follow their vocations even in the vicinity of the battlefield. Righteousness of war endeavours or, at least, righteousness of post-war endeavours, was an important consideration.

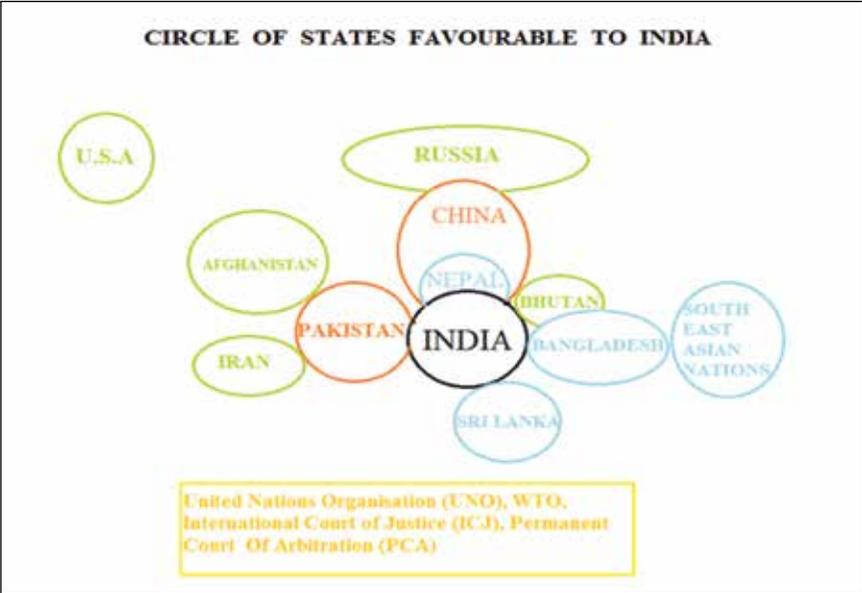
Today, in contrast, war often goes beyond the destruction of enemy forces. Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and nuclear warfare have made total elimination a possibility. The lines of morality during war and even in peacetime have blurred. Sub-conventional warfare targets, often deliberately, both the jana and the janapada.

Methodology

There are some universal facts about military strategies that surpass the boundaries of time and space. A relook at the warfare techniques of the past can help provide a temporal context to present techniques.

Kautilya provides the modern military strategist a time-tested model of diplomacy and war. He understood that no alliance was permanent. Today in international relations the saying, “there are no permanent friends or permanent enemies, only permanent interests” reflects this pragmatism. This approach requires an in-depth understanding of the position of the state vis-à-vis its neighbours. Kautilya’s “Mandala” theory talks about circle of states—*Ari* (Enemies), *Mitra* (Friends), *Madhyama* (Mediators) and *Udasina* (Neutrals). The following Figure 4 displays the possible application of Kautilya’s Mandala theory in today’s context.

Figure 4: Application of Mandala Theory in Twenty-first Century



KEY:

- Ari (Enemies)
- Mitra(Friends)
- Madhyama (Mediators)
- Udasina(Neutrals)

Based on the complex connections between major players, Kautilya recommends different course of action—*Saam* (conciliation/Treaty), *dam* (reward/exchange for mutual benefit), *dand* (force), *Bhed* (dissension). The path of deterrence or engagement, of alliance or counter-alliance to be used when dealing with friends or potential adversaries. Taking the case study of Magadha (present-day eastern India) we can draw parallels to show how these pillars were important in the past and continue to remain so. This has been displayed in the following Figure 5.

Figure 5: Application of Kautilya's Ideas in Ancient and Modern Times in India

<p>Saam (Alliance and treaties)</p> <p>Then: Alliance between Chandragupta Maurya, the ruler of Magadha and Macedonian commander Seleucus I Nicator</p> <p>Now: Treaty of Allahabad between British East India Company and the Nawab of Bengal and others (Nawab of Awadh and the Mughal Emperor) after Battle of Buxar, 1764</p>	<p>Daam (Exchange of territory)</p> <p>Then: Kasi region was transferred to King Bimbisara by Kosala as the result of a matrimonial alliance to foster better relations</p> <p>Now: Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) between India and Bangladesh, 2015 which fostered better relations between the two.</p>
<p>Dand (War)</p> <p>Then: Mauryan ruler Ashoka's war on state of Kalinga, c. 262 BCE</p> <p>Now: India-Pakistan war of 1971 resulting in the independence of Bangladesh.</p>	<p>Bhed (Treason, bribery, immoral means)</p> <p>Then: Ajatasatru, ruler of Magadh sowed seeds of dissension to break the unity of Vajjis confederacy.</p> <p>Now: In the Battle of Plassey, Robert Clive bribed Mir Jafar (commander-in-chief of Nawab of Bengal's army) dividing the ranks of Nawab's forces.</p>

KEY:

Then: refers to ancient India (till sixth century CE). Area covered: Magadha

Now: refers to modern India (sixteenth century CE to present). Area covered: eastern India

In Ancient India, janapada was an important reason for war and expansion of janapada was an important means to an end. The end was establishment of a strong and just state. In India's current strategy of war and policy of diplomacy, territory remains relevant. Land-based warfare comprises an essential aspect of conventional warfighting strategy. However, given the multifaceted security challenges that India faces today, a linear defence strategy may not suffice. Excessive focus on land warfare may result in neglect of other emerging domains of warfare. **While we are looking at territory in a dynamic way we also need to look at its defence in a dynamic way.** Attrition based force on force strategies need to be reconsidered and reworked.

Changing Arena or Battlefield

Outer space is going to be an important battlefield in the future. Defence of this arena would require not only space weapons but also launch pads on earth, moon, man-made rocket launch platforms. Thus surface warfare will continue to be important. At the same time, space assets and weapons would play a crucial role in defence of land and water territory.

The reason for such wars will continue to be land-centric. These may be—expanding one's territory or sphere of influence to space, search for new land for settlement or for resource extraction. Man's mission to colonise Mars reflects this land-centricity. Future wars, whether on earth or interplanetary war or space wars, would still be fought for territory.

Role of Territory in Twenty-first Century Hybrid War

It is said that in the twenty-first century, territory will have a limited role to play in warfare. War is going to be fought not on frontlines but in the domain of cyberspace, information realm and psychological domain.

For instance, China is looking at system confrontation and system destruction strategy as the modern mode of warfare. This has led some to argue that China is not going to be specifically focusing on territorial gain or territorial competition. However, China's territorial disputes with its neighbours reveal a territory-centric approach towards projecting state power. For example, China's dispute with Japan and South-East Asian nations over Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and Spratly Islands respectively. Recent skirmishes with India at Doklam, continued Chinese claim over Tawang, prove the same.

Any successful warfare strategy focuses on two aspects: capacity and strength of oneself and that of the opponent. In the field of military technology development India is an emerging nation. It has not yet reached the sophisticated level of advanced digital integration achieved by some western countries. System disruption warfare techniques might not prove to be as successful against India as against technologically advanced developed nations. ***China's engagement with India in the coming decade is likely to be more platform-centric rather than network-centric.***

Nonetheless the importance of such modern techniques of warfare cannot be ignored. Such attacks have the capacity of crippling India's critical energy, banking and financial infrastructure. Quantum of financial loss and damage of national prestige would be unimaginable in such scenario. India needs to accordingly develop suitable command and control structures and doctrinal concepts.

Groundwork has already been laid in this arena. National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC) was established in 2014 to ensure safe, secure and resilient information infrastructure for critical sectors of the nation. In 2018, the Government of India (GOI) decided to set up three new agencies—the Defence Cyber Agency, Defence Space Agency and the Special Operations Division—to address the new age challenges to national security. Naresh Chandra Committee had gone a step further by recommending creation of separate joint commands to deal with such challenges. Attempts are being made to integrate multiple intelligence models. Some of these include—Human Intelligence (HUMINT), Social Intelligence (SOCINT), Financial Intelligence (FININT), Technical Intelligence (TECHINT), Signals intelligence (SIGINT), Geospatial Intelligence (GEOINT). This initiative will help provide a comprehensive approach to national security.

Importance of Foot Soldiers

Rummindei inscription which talks about taxation in Mauryan era mentions that the service provided by soldiers were of significant value to the state. The villages (called *pariharaka*) that supplied soldiers were exempted from payment of land tax which was a major source of State revenue. For the common folks too it was an honour to serve in the army. What attracted them, apart from the monetary benefits and job security, was the notion of sacrifice for a noble cause. Mahabharata mentions there is no surer path to heaven than death in battle. Hero stones³ were erected to celebrate valour of the warrior who had the honour of dying on the battlefield. In today's context, India Gate can be seen as a modern hero stone to commemorate the sacrifice of thousands of martyrs. Shaurya (heroism) was and continues to be a greatly valued virtue in Indian culture.

Declining Role of Foot Soldiers?

Over time one sees a decline in the importance given to foot soldiers in ancient Indian warfare. Texts mention reduced allocation of state resources for their recruitment and maintenance while more resources were allocated to cavalry and artillery.

Looking at the ancient Indian kingdom of Magadha under the Mauryas, we find a similar trend. It is said that after the Kalinga war Ashoka, the King of Magadha, adopted a policy of *dhammagosha* (conquest through righteousness) instead of *bherigosha* (conquest through war). A closer look at the reason behind this shift in state policy reveals the pragmatic

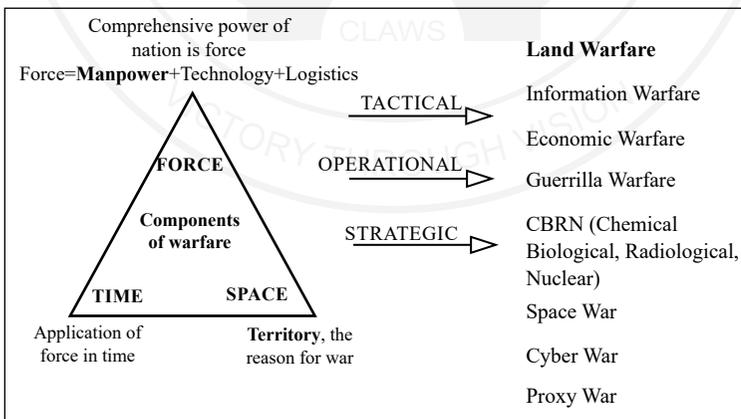
approach adopted by Ashoka. The Mauryan Empire during Ashoka's reign incorporated vast territory. There was limited scope of expansion. What was needed was consolidation of captured territory. The soft touch of moral force was more effective in this consolidation process vis-à-vis brute force. It is interesting to note that despite this official change in state policy there was no downsizing of Mauryan Army. Force or dand continued to remain an important instrument of the state to ensure compliance.

There are similar debates on the relevance of the foot soldier or infantry in today's military discourse. There have been suggestions for rightsizing the Indian army, restructuring and streamlining the infantry, reaching an ideal tooth-to-tail ratio. Structural changes will require development of cross spectrum capability with specific focus on nuclear, cyber, conventional and counter sub-conventional. In addition shortfalls in core capabilities need to be eliminated.

While such changes are essential for achieving a cohesive fighting force, the infantry continues to be the building blocks of India's defence and offence capability. They might not be, or remain in the near future, the central component of warfare but they will always be an essential component.

The below Figure 6 displays three major components of a nation's war machinery—space, time and force. Space is the Janapada or territory which is one of the main reasons for war. Timely application of force is crucial to win the space or to defend it. Force is the combination of manpower, technology and logistics. The ultimate aim is destruction of the enemy's forces. As long as the force component of the enemy remains, we need our own forces for defence and offence. Foot soldiers are an essential component of this force.

Figure 6: Components of Warfare



In 2014, India's Prime Minister laid out his vision for the armed forces in his address to a Combined Commanders' Conference. "Full-scale wars may become rare, but force will remain an instrument of deterrence and influencing behavior."

Dynamic Way of Looking at Soldiers

Changing concept of warfare demands a fresh perspective of looking at warriors. Today's challenges are multifaceted and India requires specialised forces to deal with non-conventional warfare. Today's soldier needs to be equipped with latest intelligence and weapons, trained in guerrilla tactics and cyber counter-intelligence. This requires a new role for the soldier but the soldier remains important.

India needs a rapid response force backed by latest technology and intelligence to respond to security challenges in a swift manner at short notice. Indian Army is shifting gear to form Integrated Battle Groups (IBGs), changing the way it fights its enemies. IBGs are smaller, self-contained fighting units that can ensure faster mobilisation and provide more flexibility to the army. These changes are being considered keeping in mind the terrain, threat perception and capability of the enemy.

India is Largely a Land-Based Power and a Land-Based Force

Most of our defence and offence weapons have an essential land-based component. For example, land-based missiles to protect airspace. Surface-to-air missiles (SAM) are an essential component of India's Air Defence system.

The major bone of contention that India has with Pakistan and China is border issues. In the areas of previous conflict and wars, the Northern, North-western, North-eastern sectors, there was limited scope of deployment of air force and navy. The terrain, weather and inter-valley movement capability were the deciding factors. Also the technicality of 'not crossing the LOC' limited the role of Air Force during Indo-China war of 1962. In such situations Air Force played a crucial role in swift attack and large-scale damage but ground troops were needed to block, to attack and capture, and to hold ground.

Today the USA is fighting the majority of its battles overseas where it has limited land base. This results in a more robust role for its navy and air force. However, for India, land warfare and foot soldiers will continue to remain essential to its military strategy. For example, Kargil War reinforced the importance of continuous presence of troops to hold post and check infiltration. During the winter months of 1998-99 Pakistani troops infiltrated several kilometres into Indian territory in Kargil sector of J&K. They were able to do so because Indian troops stationed at the peaks had

withdrawn during the winter months, given the inhospitable climate. In order to recapture the lost territory the Air Force played a crucial role. They destroyed Pakistani bunkers and supported the ground troops. However, this lost territory was not considered reclaimed till the time it was physically captured by infantry.

It is essential to put one's feet on the ground, *one's pada*, to proclaim it as one's territory, *one's janapada*.

Man or Machine?

In ancient India weapons based on latest technology were crucial for the defence of territory and for offensive action. These weapons have changed over time but some parallels can be drawn. Catapult and arrows of ancient Indian warfare have been replaced today by missiles and air defence systems. *Rathamusla* (literally mobile clubs) could be considered an early ancestor of today's armoured vehicle. The roots of modern artillery tactics can be traced back to Mughal Emperor Babur who deployed them on a large scale during the First Battle of Panipat.

Today technology plays an indispensable role in warfare. Krishna Rao committee recommended effective utilisation of technological revolution to ensure paradigm changes in warfighting capability. It is critical for ensuring a modern fighting force. However, technology has to aid and not replace the ground troops.

Lethal Autonomous Weapons (LAWs) and artificial intelligence are emerging as advanced means of warfare. However, they may not be as central to Indian warfare as to the western developed nations; at least not in the coming decades. There are three main reasons for this:

- Level of technological advancement
- Fighting capacity and psychology of our adversary
- The terrain

Firstly, our C2ISR (Command and Control, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance) capacity is at the initial stage of development. India needs a national level plan for fully harnessing the national potential in this sphere. Another consideration is the ethical concern usage of autonomous weapons raises. There have been incidents of technical glitches in LAWs resulting in mistaken identification. This is a sensitive issue especially given the possibility of people living near the border getting hurt in the crossfire. Looking ahead there is a possibility of a human-in-the-loop (system requires a human to direct the system to select a target and attack it) or human-on-the-loop (system selects targets and attacks them, albeit with human operator

oversight) system but not a human-out-of-loop (human operators out of the decision-making loop completely) system. A scenario where there is a complete shift from “shooters to sensors” seems to be unlikely. Thus, man behind the machine remains and will remain important.

Secondly, understanding the terrain is essential. India’s borders are very diverse and extreme. They encompass high altitude areas, super high altitude snow-bound areas, desert, marshy lands, forests, plains, etc. This brings out the real challenges in guarding and management of borders. Defence strategy needs to take this diversity into account. Technology does not understand diversity, it understands linearity. A standardised autonomous weapon system may not prove to be as effective as ground troops, given man’s capability to adapt to changing circumstances and terrain. That being said, technology can definitely aid in establishing an effective border security mechanism to check unauthorised movement of people and material. India is installing a Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS) with laser fences, CCTV cameras, and quick response team to establish a smart fencing system to detect and counter infiltration attempts. Such electronic surveillance measures can help maintain a constant vigil. They can help reduce the physical deployment of foot soldiers in the field of surveillance and monitoring.

Thirdly, it is important to understand India’s two adversarial neighbours. India has to be prepared to conduct military operations in a multi-front scenario, i.e., Pakistan in the West and China in the North and the East. Achieving a favourable outcome in a “two-front war” scenario would require militarily acceptable force levels. Such force levels have to be adequate to hold one front while taking an offensive approach on another. In addition, sufficient reserve forces, flexible to move between the two fronts would be required. This further reiterates the need for maintaining a sufficient number of foot soldiers.

Pakistan is a low-tech adversary in the west. It is involved in Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) with India in the J&K sector. To counter this India requires the presence of a large number of foot soldiers with specialised training in stealth and guerilla tactics. Given the mountainous terrain of Kashmir, feet on ground becomes even more important. However, in certain sections of Indo-Pakistan border the dependence on infantry can be reduced. Border areas of Rajasthan and Gujarat are desert areas with a plain topography. Here mechanised forces can help reduce the requirement of men on ground. There is also the possibility of using SAM and air force to target anti-national elements across the border. For example: The recent surgical strike (2019) was conducted without using infantry or crossing the border physically.

China is a high-tech adversary with hybrid warfare capacity. To counter China, India needs to enhance its conventional warfighting capacity as well as build on its hybrid and informational warfighting capacity. In addition, China has the advantage of altitude. Tibet provides China the advantage of rapid mobilisation of troops and equipment. This forces India to ensure adequate deterrence by maintaining a minimum force level. Such forces have to be acclimatised to high altitude and stationed permanently in forward position. In addition, a mountain strike corps is being raised as a specialised counteroffensive force.

This shows the important role infantry plays at present. Given the challenges of multi-front and multidimensional warfare that India faces, infantry will continue to play a crucial role in warfare. It will continue to do so at least in the immediate future as well.

In the next few decades there is a possibility of reducing the forces on border during peacetime. A step forward in this direction is being taken by building infrastructure in forward zones to reduce time for mobilisation of forces. Projects such as strategic road building, forward military air bases have been undertaken. Attempts are being made to increase the fleet of light combat helicopter. It will improve the quality of aerial surveillance. It would also enhance capability of moving troops to occupy defensive positions quickly. Such initiatives will provide flexibility in stationing of forces and ensure swiftness in deployment of reserves when needed.

Way Forward: Transforming India's Armed Forces

Transforming India's armed forces into a strong and modern military of appropriate size, structure and capability is a must. It is crucial to deter our foes, defend the country and project India's power. This will help India achieve its regional and global aspirations. Such transformative course of action, especially with respect to Territory and Infantry, may include the following:

- Land Warfare Doctrine 2018 reiterates the importance of land warfare. It acknowledges that defence of national territory and its resources continues to be an important aspect of India's warfare strategies. At the same time, it acknowledges that India is facing a multi-domain war today. Articulating a military strategy and a suitable nuclear doctrine in context of these multiple domains is important. Thus military strategies need to focus on military application of Nanotechnology, high-energy lasers, hypersonic strike technology, and artificial intelligence.

- We need a proactive approach to border management. Mr. Madhav Godbole, chair of border management task force, recommended a strategy of pre-emptive reaction. The task force recommended the Central Reserve Police Force to be designated as the primary national level counter-insurgency force. This would enable the other central paramilitary forces like the BSF and Indo-Tibetan Border Police to return to their primary role of better border management. The border forces must establish closer linkages with the border population to protect them from falling prey to subversive anti-India propaganda.
- Developing self-sufficiency in defence procurement and strengthening indigenous manufacturing capability is of utmost importance. Make in India initiative by the Government is one step in this direction. Such initiatives need to specifically focus on modernising weapons for infantry.
- There is need for Synergy and Integration amongst the three armed services and other stakeholders. Some of these stakeholders being Strategic Forces (COBRA, CRPF, NSG, RR), DRDO, space agencies, private defence industry, etc. Joint Forces Doctrine (2017) suggested such synergy to be achieved through joint operational structures, information and intelligence sharing and interlinking capacity. One example of such collaboration is the National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID). It was constituted to ensure seamless information exchange by connecting database of core security agencies of GOI.

Important Take-Aways

- Janapada (territory) and land warriors (foot soldiers) will remain important in warfare strategy due to three reasons: (1) Fighting capacity and psychology of our adversary, (2) Diverse and extreme terrain at our borders, (3) India is a land-based power and a land-based force. It has not yet reached advanced stage of military technology development.
- Multidimensional approach of viewing territory. The word territory invokes not only images of land border but extends to the realm of water, air and in future possibly outer space too. Defence of all these dimensions of territory will continue to be an important aspect of India's military strategy.

- With changing domains of war, India needs a dynamic warfare strategy. Land-based warfare comprises an essential aspect of conventional warfighting strategy. However given the multifaceted security challenges that India faces today, a linear defence strategy may not suffice. While we are looking at territory in a dynamic way we also need to look at its defence in a dynamic way.
 - Territorial integrity is important but one should avoid excessive territorial fixation. Land boundary agreement (LBA) between India and Bangladesh was a pragmatic approach to solving land border disputes.
 - A flexible way of looking at territory may prove to be an essential step in solving India-China border dispute. Janapada is an asset, and like any other asset should be traded if it provides political-economic-strategic mileage. We have to consider the possibility of a 'land exchange' deal in the future to settle the dispute peacefully based on mutual benefit. Geopolitics is the art of giving and taking to serve national interest.
 - There are three major components of a nation's war machinery—space, time and force. Space is Janapada or territory, the reason for war. Timely application of force is crucial to win the space. Force is combination of manpower, technology and logistics. Foot soldiers are an essential component of this force. The ultimate aim is destruction of enemy's forces. As long as the force component of the enemy remains, we need soldiers. Changing character of war demands a new role for the soldier but the soldier remains important.
 - Foot soldiers are needed to hold ground. It is essential to put one's feet on ground, one's pada, to proclaim it as one's territory, one's janapada.
- * The maps and diagrams used in this paper have been created or modified by the author.

Notes

1. Ashwamedha sacrifice—a horse accompanied by the king's warriors would be released to wander for a period of one year. In the territory traversed by the horse, any rival could dispute the king's authority by challenging the warriors accompanying it. After one year, if no enemy had managed to kill or capture the horse, the animal would be guided back to the king's capital. It would be then sacrificed, and the king would be declared as an undisputed sovereign.
2. Rajasuya sacrifice—consecration ceremony which involves imperial sacrifice to prove the divine right of the king to rule that territory.

3. Hero stones are memorials commemorating the honourable death of a hero in battle. Erected between the third century BCE and the eighteenth century CE, hero stones are found all over India.

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